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Comprehension with Indulgence.

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Nihil est jam dictum quod non fuit dictum prius. Terrence.

IT hath pleased His Majesty, by several Gracious Overtures, to commend a Union of his Protestant Subjects to the Consideration of Parliament. A Design full of all Princely Wisdom, Honesty, and Goodness. In this Atchievement there is a double interest (I apprehend) to be distinguished and weighed: that of *Religion* it self, and that of the *Nation*. The advance of *Religion* does consist much in the Unity of its Professors, both in *Opinion* and *Practice*, to be of one *Mind*, and one *Heart*, and one *Way* (in Discipline and Worship) so far as may be, according to the Scriptures. The advance of the *Nation* does lye in the Freedom and Flourishing of Trade, and uniting the whole Body in the common Benefit, and dependance on the Government. The one of these bespeaks an *Established Order* and *Accommodation*: the other bespeaks *Indulgence*, *Liberty of Conscience*, or *Toleration*. For, while people are in danger about Religion, we dare not launch out into Trade (say they) but we must keep our Monies, seeing wee know not into what streights we shall be driven; and when, in reference to their Party, they are held under severity, it is easie for those, who are designing Heads, to mould them into Wrath and Faction; which, without that occasion, will melt, and dissolve it self into bare dissent of Opinion, peaceably rejoycing under the enjoyment of Protection.

The King, we know, is concerned, as *Supreme Governour*, and as a *Christian, Protestant Governour*. As he is *King*, he is to seek the Welfare of the Nation; as he is a *Christian*, the Flourishing of Religion: and the Protestant Religion particularly is his interest, as this Kingdom doth lie in ballance, (He being the chief Party) with its Neighbour Nations.

The Judgment now of some is for a *Comprehending Act*, which may take in those who are for our Parochial Churches, that Severity then might be used for reclaiming all whosoever separate from them: The Judgment of some others is, for a Free and Equal *Act of Grace* to all indifferently, (the Papist with most excepted) whether Separatists or others, abhorring *Comprehension*, as more dangerous to them, upon that account mentioned, than all the Acts that have passed. Neither of these judg up to the full Interest of the King and Kingdom, as is proposed.

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posed. It becomes not the *Presbyterian*, if his Principles will admit him to own our Parochial Churches, and enjoy a Living, to be willing to have his Brethren, the *Independent*, given up to Persecution: and it becomes not the *Separatist*, if he may but enjoy his Conscience, to repine, or envy at the *Presbyterian* for reaping any farther Emolument, seeing both of them (supposing the latter may do so) have as much at the bottom as can be, in their capacities, desired of either. It is an Act therefore of a mixt Complection, providing both *Comprehension* and *Indulgence* for the different Parties, must serve our purpose.

And to this end (as we may humbly hope) there is a BILL at present in the House, *A BILL for the Ease of the Protestant Dissenter in the Business of Religion*. Which that (upon this present Prorogation) it may be cast into this Model, I must present the same, yet in a little farther Explication.

There are two sorts (we all know) of these *Protestant Dissenters*. One that own the Established Ministry, and our Parish-Congregations, and are in capacity of Union upon that account, desiring it heartily upon condescension to them in some small matters: The other, that own not our Churches, and so are incapable of a Conjunction, who do not, and cannot desire it, or seek it.

For the *One*, that which we propose is a farther latitude in the present Constituted Order, that such may be received; and this we call *Comprehension*, or *Accommodation*. Let us suppose, that nothing else were required of a Man, to be a Minister of a Parish, than there is to the Parishioner, to be a Member of a Parish-Church, as part of the National: If a person baptized will come to Church, and hear Common-Prayer, and receive the Sacrament, and does nothing worthy of Excommunication, he is, he may, he must be received for a Parochial Member: In like manner, if a Minister first ordained (and so *Episcopally*, or *Classically* approved in his abilities for that Function) will but read the Book of Liturgy, and administer the Sacraments according to it, and does nothing which deserves Suspension (we appeal to all the indifferently sober) why should not this suffice a Man for the enjoying his Living, and exercising the Office unto which he is called?

For the *Other*, there is indeed nothing can be done to bring those in, & joyn them with us in Parochial Union; yet is there this to be proposed, that you bear with them, and not let any be *Persecuted* meerly for their Consciences; and that we call *Indulgence*, or *Toleration*. If the *Presbyterian* now may be *Comprehended*, he will be satisfied, to act in his Ministry

nistry without endeavouring any *Alteration* otherwise of Episcopacy: If the *Congregationalist* be *Indulged*, he will be satisfied, though he be not *Comprehended*; for that he cannot submit unto, and so shall there be no Disobligation put on any, but all be pleased, and enjoy the *Ease* of this *BILL*. Let but the Grounds of *Comprehension* be laid wide enough to take in all who can own and come into the publick Liturgy (which we suppose as yet to be the greater weight of the Nation), and when the Countenance of Authority, and all State-Emoluments are cast into one Scale, and others let alone to come of it, without Persecution to Enflame them, or Preferment to Encourage them, (especially if one expedient be used, which shall not pass unmentioned in the close, that such as come in may find it really better to them, to be a Priest to a Tribe, than a Levite to a Family,) we need not doubt but Time, the Mistress of the wise and unwise, will discover the peaceable issue of such Counsels.

And here let me pause a little; for methinks I see what *Icesicles* hang on the *Eaves* of the *Parliament-House* at this Motion, what Prejudices, I mean, and Impressions have been laid on the Members by former Acts. There was a Speech delivered, by the then Chancellour in *Christ-Church* Hall in *Oxford*, to the Parliament there, and the Scholars assembled, wherein the Glory of contriving the *Oxford Oath*, and consequently of the like former Impositions, was most *magnificently*, as well as *spitefully* enough arrogated to its proper Author. It was, it seems, the designed Policy of that Great Man, to root those Principles out of mens minds, upon which the late Wars (as he supposed) were builded, and he would do it by this invention, to wit, the imposing upon them new *Declarations*, *Oaths* and *Subscriptions*, of a strain framed contrary to those Principles. I do remember now the Sentence of *Esdra*s to the Apologue of the Angel, where the *Woods* and the *Seas* would encounter one another. *Verily* (says he) *it was a foolish purpose*; for the Trees could not come down from the Hills, nor the Waves get up from the Shoars. I must say the same of this Policy. It was really a great vanity to think that Folks should be made to swear away their Thoughts and Beliefs. Whatsoever it is we think or believe, we do think it, we must think it, we do believe it, we must believe it, notwithstanding any of these outward Impositions. The honest man indeed will refuse an Injunction against his Conscience, the Knave will swallow it, but both retain their *Principles*; which the last will be the likeliest to put any villanous *Practice*. On the contrary, there is nothing could be advised more certain, to keep the Covenant, and such Prin-

iples alive in mens hearts, and memories, than this perpetual enjoin-
ing the *Renunciation* of it. Nor may you wonder, if that Lesson sink
deep into mens flesh, which you will teach them with *Briars* and *Thorns*,
as *Gideon* taught the men of *Succoth*. Besides, it is the most unpolitick
thing that ever could have been, for such Contents, as are of that dan-
gerous consequence to Majesty and the Government, to have them once
disputed, or brought into question, to be put into these Declarations,
Oaths and Subscriptions, which necessitates the examination of them to
so many. It was the Wisdom of the ancient Church, instead of Con-
tention about the Jewish Ceremonies, to take care they might have
an honourable Burial: and I dare say, if that Great Lord Chancellour
had but put off his Cap to the Covenant, and bidden it a fair adieu only,
he should have done more towards its Extirpation, than by all this ite-
rated trouble to mens Consciences. And if it shall therefore please the
succeeding *Ministers* of our *State*, instead of going to root out the Prin-
ciples of *Innovation* which are got into people, by this means (which is no
means to do it, but the means to rivet them more in us), to endeavour
rather, to root out the *Causes* from us, which make men willing to enter-
tain such Principles, and desire change: I suppose their Policy will prove
the sounder. The way to establish the Throne of the King is this, to
make it appear, that all those *Grievances*, and all those *Good things* which
the people in the late times expected to be removed, or to be obtained,
by a *Common-wealth*, or a change of the Government, may be more
effectually accomplished by a King in the Acts of his Parliament.

I am sensible how my Theme rises upon me, and that I begin to shoot
wide: I take my aim therefore again, and two things, in earnest, I
would expect from this BILL, as the sum of what is necessary to the
End of it, our *Ease*, if it be made to serve the turn. The one is,
that Bishop *Land* be confined to his Cathedrals: and the other, that
Chancellour *Hyde* be totally expell'd our Acts of Parliament. By the
first, I mean, that the Ceremonies in the ordinary Parish-Churches be
left to the liberty of the Minister, to use, or use them not, according
to his Conscience, and Prudence toward his own Congregation: and
by the *latter*, that all these new devised *Oaths*, *Subscriptions* and *Declara-*
tions, together with the *Canonial Oath*, and the *Subscription* in the Ca-
nons be suspended for the time to come. If that be too much, I shall
content my self with a modest Motion, that whatsoever these *Decla-*
rations be, that are required to be *Made*, *Subscribed*, or *Sworn*, they
may be imposed only as to the *Matter* and *End*, leaving the Takers
but free to the use of their own Expressions. And this Expedient I ga-
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ther from my Lord Cook, who hath providently, as it were, against such a season, laid in this Observation. *The form of the Subscription set down in the Cannons, ratified by King James, was not expressed in the Act of the Thirteenth of Elizabeth. Instit. p. 4. c. 74.* And consequently, if the Clergy enjoyed this Freedom until then, in reference to the particulars therein contained, what hinders why they might not have the same restored, in reference also to others?

It is true, that it may seem hard to many in the Parliament, to undo any thing themselves have done: but though this be no *Rule* for *Christians*, who are sometimes to *repent* as well as *believe*, if they be loath to *Repeal* any thing, what if they shall only *Interpret* or *Explain*? Let us suppose then some Clause in this BILL, or some new Act, for *Explanations*. If any Nonconformist cannot come up to the full meaning and intent of these Injunctions rightly explained, let him remain *in statu quo*, under the state only of *Indulgence*, without benefit of *Comprehension*; for so long as those who are not *Comprehended*, may yet enjoy that *Ease* as to be *Indulged* in some equal measure answerable to his Majesties Declaration, whether *Comprehension* be large or narrow, such terms as we obtain are pure advantage, and such as we obtain not, are no loss: But if any does, and can honestly agree to the whole Sense the Parliament intends in such Impositions, why should there be any Obstruction for such a man, though he delivers himself in his own Words, to be received into the established Order with others? Unless men will look on these Injunctions only to be contrived for *Engines of Battery*, to destroy the Nonconformist: and not as *Instruments of Unity*, to edifie the Church of God.

I will not leave our *Congregational Brethren* neither, so long as I have something more that may be said for them, not ordinarily considered by any. It is this, that though indeed they are not, and cannot seek to be of our Churches as they are *Parochial*, under the *Diocefs* or *Superintendency* of the Bishops: yet do they not refuse, but seek to be comprehended within the Church as *National* under His Majesty. I will explain my self. The Church may be considered as *Universal*, and so Christ alone is the Head of it, and we receive our Laws from him: or as *Particular*, and so the Pastors are Heads, Guides, or Bishops over their respective Flocks, who are commanded therefore to obey them in the Lord: or as *National*, which is an accidental and external respect to the Church of God, wherein the King is to be acknowledged the Supreme Head of it, and as I judg no otherwise: For thus also runs the Statute, *That our Sovereign Lord shall be taken and reputed.*

puted the only Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England, called Ecclesia Anglicana. Now if it should please the King and Parliament, to allow and approve these *Separate Meetings, and Stated places, or Worship,* by a Law, as His Majesty did by his Declaration, I must profess that, as such Assemblies by this means must be constituted immediately *integral parts* of the Church as National, no less than our Parish-Congregations: so would the Congregate Churches (at least those that understand themselves) own the King for Head over them, in the same sense as we own him Head over ours, that is as much as to say, for the Supreme *Coercive* Governour of all (in this accidental regard), both to keep every several Congregation to that Gospel-Order themselves profess: and to supervise their Constitutions in things indifferent, that nothing be done but in Subordination to the Peace of the Kingdom.

Well, let us suppose then a Liberty for these Separate Assemblies under the Visitation of His Majesty and his Justices, and not the Bishops; I would fain know what were the Evil you can find in them. If it lie in any thing, it must be in that you call *Schism*. Separation then let us know, in it self simply considered, is nothing, neither good nor evil. There may be reason to *divide, or separate* some Christians from others out of Prudence, as the *Catechumens* of old from the *fully instructed*, for their greater Edification; and as a Chappel or two is added to a Parish-Church when the People else were too big a Congregation. It is not all *Division* then or *Separation* is *Schism*: but *sinful Division*. Now the Supreme Authority as National Head, having appointed the Parochial Meetings, and required all the Subjects of the Land to frequent them, and them alone, for the acknowledging, glorifying, or National serving and worshipping the one only true God, and his Son, whom we have generally received: and this Worship or Service, in the nature of it being intrinsically good, and the external Order (such as that of Time and Place, and the like Circumstances) being properly under his Jurisdiction, it hath seemed to me hitherto, that unless there was something in that Order or Way prescribed which is sinful, and that required too as a Condition of that Communion, there is no man could refuse his attendance on these Parochial Assemblies, without the sin of Disobedience; and consequently his Separation thereby becoming sinful, proves *Schism*: but if the Scene be altered, and these separate Assemblies made *Legal*, the *Schism*, in reference to the National Church, upon the same account, does vanish. *Schism* is a Separation from that Church whereof we *ought* or are *bound* to be members: if the Supreme Authority then loose our Obligation to the Parish-Meeting, so that we are bound no longer, the *ini-*
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quity (I say, upon this account) is not to be found; and the Schism gone. Lo here, a way opened for the Parliament (if they please) to rid the trouble and scruple of Schism (at once) out of the Land. If they please not; yet is there something to be thought on for the Separatist in a way of *Forbearance*; that the innocent Christian, at least, as it was in the time of *Trajan*, may not be sought out unto Punishment: Especially when such a *Toleration* only is desired, as is consistent with the *Articles of Faith*, a *Good Life*, and the *Government of the Nation*.

And now I turn me to the Houses. My Lords and Gentlemen! I will suppose you honest Persons, that would do as you would be done unto; that would not wrong any, or if you did, would make them recompence. There hath been very hard Acts passed, which when the bills were brought in, might haply look smooth and faire to you: but you saw not the covert art, secret machination, and purposely contrived snares against one whole party. If such a form of words would not, another should do their business. By this means, you in the first place yourselves some of you were overstript: Multitudes dispossessed of their Livings: The Vineyard let out to others: The Lord Jesus the Master of it, deprived of many of his faithful Labourers: And the poor sheep (what had they done) bereft of their accustomed spiritual food, to the hazard of their eternal Souls. Among many Arguments therefore for Liberty in other Papers, from *Policy*, *Convenience*, *Reason of State*, and *Reason of Religion*, I have this one to offer you of a more binding nature, an Argument from *Justice*, *Righteousness*, and *Restitution* to the Displaced. It is true, that the Places they once had are filled, and disposed: but there are others enough. There are many of those who possess theirs, do also keep their own, and keep more. There are many, who are *Canons*, *Deans*, *Prebendaries*, that are also *Parsons*, *Rectors*, *Vicars*; who have Benifices and Honours by Heaps, and by the Bushel. If it shall please You therefore in this BILL on the Anvil, or in another, to take cognizance of *Pluralities*, that for the preventing an idle, scandalous, covetously overgrown, unprofitable Ministry, every man who hath more than one Cure of Souls, or one Dignity, shall give them up into a publick stock, or to a general Distribution, you shall do the Church right, and the Ejected right, you shall give such Drones their due, and God his due, and strew the way by this meanes for the making your *Grace* intended in this Bill, of signification. In the name of God Sirs, let me move you to this, if it were only *Hac Vice*, for a present needful conjunction of us at this season. We see the jawes of Popery and the Sectary opening upon us, if the sober Protestant interest be not united,
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we perish. I know who will be ready to stamp here and throw dust in the Air, for it is these *Sons of the Horse-leech* whose voice is still *Give Give* that will never be contented with a *single Portion*. A *Dignity* therefore with a *Living*, let them be allowed: but one *Dignity* and one *Cure of Souls* should be all, though they *cut themselves with Lances*. It is this damn'd hard objection at the bottom, the Priests covetousness and corruption, rather than their dispute about things indifferent, that really hinders the Churches Peace and Prosperity.

To conclude. According to what every mans mind is most upon (the Publick interest, or his Own), such is his value more or less.

The End.
